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Congressman

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March 8, 2000

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**Opening Statement — Chairman Buyer
Hearing on Sustaining the All Volunteer Force
and Reserve Component Overview**

Today, the Subcommittee turns its attention to two major areas of interest.

The first two witness panels will provide us the opportunity to better understand the significant challenges that the nation faces in “Sustaining the All Volunteer Force.”

With the third panel of today’s witnesses, the subcommittee will change focus somewhat to hear directly from the senior reserve component leadership regarding their priorities and concerns for fiscal year 2001. I’ll have more to say about this third panel when I introduce them.

In my view, sustaining the all-volunteer military is a national challenge.

Given the failing, or near failing recruiting and retention track record of the armed services over the last five years, it appears to me that we all have a great deal to learn about making the All Volunteer Force work.

It is true that the challenges to recruiting and retention are immense. Both employment opportunity and college attendance are at record levels. It will be difficult to compete, but our first priority must be to ensure that our attitudes and actions are not adding to the problem.

I think Secretary of Defense Cohen made a point of visiting the advertising agencies used by the services because he thought recruiting advertising was off track. He came away from those meetings so uncomfortable with the structure of the contracts and the process behind the advertising campaigns that he directed an outside review of military advertising.

He hired two marketing professionals, Mike Murphy and Carter Eskew, to conduct the review. The review revealed that Secretary Cohen’s concerns were justified:

- The services don’t have the marketing expertise needed to operate an efficient campaign and end up being the “intellectual captives” of the advertising agencies.
- Service ad campaigns need to emphasize intangible benefits and traditional patriotic themes.
- Instead of being the national leader in youth research, DOD’s knowledge on how to reach recruit candidates was limited and outdated.
- The services inconsistent funding of recruiting accounts was yielding inefficient advertising strategies and wasting marketing dollars.

(MORE)

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Regarding the need to emphasize intangible benefits in recruiting advertising, the finding of the Murphy/Eskew Review reinforces the very same recommendation made in December 1997 by the Kassebaum Baker Federal Advisory Committee on Gender-Integrated Training and Related Issues.

Additionally, Secretary Cohen has stated that he supports advertising themes that focus on intangible benefits. Here is his reaction to my statement advocating traditional advertising themes during a February 9th hearing:

“What we have to do is to appeal to a greater sense of patriotism, of can-do, of really, self-fulfillment. And, yes, we have to say there are material benefits that come from this. But basically, its got to go to the heart and soul of saying that you need to reach for the stars and our military can help you arrive there.”

Notwithstanding the support of two independent reviews and the Secretary of Defense for a return to patriotic and self-improvement advertising themes, the Army would seem to be prepared to drop the second most recognizable advertising slogan of the century—“Be all you can be.”

If you believe that today’s youth will respond to advertising messages that emphasize intangible benefits, why would you abandon the one advertising theme that sends the most powerful message about self-fulfillment?

Regarding the finding by the Murphy/Eskew Review about the problems associated with inconsistent and uncertain funding, the Subcommittee concluded last year that there is a direct link between recruiting and retention failure and the inability of the services to adequately fund recruiting and retention accounts in a timely manner.

It is apparent that personnel authorities in the armed services have difficulty winning budget battles on recruiting and retention. There is not a single service, active or reserve component, that does not have an example of a recruiting account that is funded in the fiscal year 2001 budget request at less than what the service is expecting to execute in that account during fiscal year 2000.

These reductions are all coming at a time when every recruiting manager I have talked to is very clear that fiscal year 2001 is expected to be every bit as difficult for recruiting as this year. And this year has every potential to be a repeat of the recruiting failures experienced in fiscal year 1999.

As further evidence of budget battles lost, I can show you the services’ list of unfunded recruiting and retention requirements in fiscal year 2001. Ladies and gentlemen, the total of that list is \$547 million!

Our task today is to understand the scope of the recruiting problem and how we intend to get back on track.

In addition, we must better understand the factors that are influencing retention.

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